

# Linder

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## SPEAKERS

Robert Curvin, William Linder

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R

Robert Curvin 00:10

Okay, so Bill let me start by asking you to talk a little bit about your growing up and where you grew up and and you know how you got to the priesthood, first of all, and so on.

W

William Linder 00:25

Well, I grew up in North Hudson, in West New York. And my father volunteered quite a bit in politics, but on the Republican side, which was something in, you know, always battling Hague, although interesting enough at our table dinner table, no one could say anything negative about Hague, because to my father during the Depression, no one ever lost their home. No one did without eating, no one did without heat. Or health care. And in fact, you know, Margaret Hague became internationally known the maternity hospital there. So that actually Hague was held up. But on the other hand, my father thought it was his duty to create a loyal opposition, as it were, you know, no one should control the political process as much as Hague. So, I, we talk politics every day. And of course, Hudson County, I always tell it's the University of politics, it was a great place to grow up. I used to when I was probably 10 years old, we'd go into one of the polling places when they close and get the results and then phone them in, you know, and I'd get 10 bucks for doing that. And that was like, that was my background. I went to St. Joseph's grammar school there. And that is still with me a lot. Because we you know, we we didn't you didn't pay at that time, there were no tuitions. And then went down to St. Peter's Prep, and had the Jesuits for the first time. It was really great, and also gave me a wider range of people. You know, from Union County, Hudson County, Bergen and Essex, again, to expose you to a lot, bigger world you know.

R

Robert Curvin 02:18

Did you travel at all at that time? Or?

William Linder 02:21

Not so much then, no, no. Did a lot of travel by camping, I'd go to Canada, camping, and kind of bummed my way around. And luckily, in that year, if you stopped to go to Mass, somebody would adopt you at the mass and take you to breakfast, feed you actually.

Robert Curvin 02:44

Did you always know that you would go into the priesthood? Or

William Linder 02:47

No, I went to engineering, actually. I always knew I was gonna go into engineering and I did. I went up to Manhattan College of Engineering. And it's there that I decided that I really wanted to do something over and above in the way of service. So I started looking around, I originally wanted to really go into the missions. And but then my father died. And so I really need to stay closer to home. And that then got me into the diocesan priesthood.

Robert Curvin 03:20

You have any siblings brothers and sisters?

William Linder 03:22

I have one sister older than myself.

Robert Curvin 03:27

And how did you get to Newark?

William Linder 03:31

I did in the seminary in sociology, I did a paper which Professor liked and eventually I gave the presentation to the whole seminary to the 300 we had then and and it had to do with the area of racial prejudice. And and then when I was ordained, you would go and get your you know, your assignment and then what I thought I was going to be assigned because of my background and engineering is going to go on to every year one priest went to Seton Hall for math. And they went somewhere else from there but you'd go on the faculty and then you'd get you know, finish a doctorate in math and then come back and teach. And that's what I thought I was going to do and I really didn't like that. But the advantage was that t- you remember of course Kearny, Carey I mean Carey, Paul, it's Paul Kearny here. Tom Carey Tom Carey.

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R

Robert Curvin 04:35

Mosignor Carey right.

W

William Linder 04:38

Had a lot of influence a great deal of influence. I mean, could always pick priests. And evidently they recommended me was close to the faculty had been the head of the seminary for it's physical, you know, environment, taking care of it. And so he got his, you know, got his pick and that was me. So, I was the happiest guy in the world. Because I did not want to go to graduate school for three years at that point

R

Robert Curvin 05:03

In math, you had enough of math.

W

William Linder 05:08

Especially in math! So (unintelligible) really took me in different direction.

R

Robert Curvin 05:12

And when you got here was Queen of Angels was the parish then? Right? And and was Queen of Angels engaged with the housing tenants at that time? Or was that something that you began to work on?

W

William Linder 05:31

Well, Queen of Angels was really right in the middle of four public housing projects, which probably represented almost 50% of the public housing of Newark at that, in 1963. So really, you know, I would walk every day, the housing projects, that's basically where I was all the time. And the parish was very active super active actually it was growing in leaps and bounds. And, you know, we had like, we eventually before I left there we had four masses for Sunday. So it's, you can get an idea what kind of it was a very active place, and you could do anything, you know, really had no restrictions. And I came in 63. And my first assignment was, we got three buses for the March on Washington. And, and I was in charge of that. So you get thrown into it, like immediately. And basically, about half the people we served were in public housing and about half were in those wood frame buildings, which you know, about 97% were structurally unsound. So that was pretty much our neighborhood. That was really my beginning. My education I owe a lot to Paul Ylvsacker

R

Robert Curvin 06:51

Don't we all?

W

William Linder 06:53

Who said to me, you know, don't go messing with people's lives unless you going back to study and get something in a more reflective environment. So that's what I did. And then I went to Fordham, because I knew a priest over there, Father, Joe Fitzpatrick, who was really kind of a probably number one person on the migration of Puerto Ricans in this country, and was really very well known. And so I really jumped at the opportunity to go in there.

R

Robert Curvin 07:25

So how did the and how and when did the organization emerge to promote and develop the rent strike against the housing authority?

W

William Linder 07:38

Well, we had all these projects and public housing, including we actually had in the neighborhood part we had a couple storefronts, you know, which we ran actually, for neighborhoods. But the one in Stella Wright the decision was made to rent an apartment there. And Tom Comerford (unintelligible) Tom Comerford went there to live. One of the priests with you at Queen of Angels? and went there, to live and just try to establish a small Christian community. We had gone all of us down to Panama, to San Miguelito to see a parish down there, which was built on a different concept of parish that we had, and he was the beginning of kind of trying to implement that,

R

Robert Curvin 08:32

Really? So you were engaged with some of the Latin American philosophers on social action.

W

William Linder 08:39

Very much yeah, right. And well, because of Fitzpatrick actually, I got to know Ivan Illich and spent two weekends up here with him. You had to be selected to be in this class. And you got credits for it. And then I went down when they told me at the Archdiocese, I'd never be assigned to a parish again. I decided to go down to Cuernavaca in Mexico and study under him. So I spent a summer there.

R

Robert Curvin 09:12

Under Ivan Illich? Well, now the people will not know. A lot of people will not know exactly the import of this kind of exposure. And so you can say a little bit more about Illich and his thinking at the time?

W

William Linder 09:25

Illich's? Yeah, well, I think Illich's first big work was in education, which I wish more people read today. Which, you know, the work you know, it's under deschooling. And he felt that we were really far too highly organized and bureaucratized to educate and what he wanted was a much more open system. And he got all kinds of difficulty with that. And then he moved on and said something like that about the priesthood. Right and got in more difficulty. So he was actually at Catholic University in Puerto Rico, he had to move to Cuernavaca. That's when I caught him after he moved. And then the third one was on health. You know, and he really believed that we were, you know, we were too taken with the structures and the bureaucracy and not enough into educating or health care or, you know, and then the priesthood were becoming little bureaucrats rather than priests. He divided priesthood actually into kind of, uh, the bureaucracy side of it, which is, you know, being an administrator for the rules. And then the other is to be actually an impact in the world, you're in. And so he divided that and he did that pretty much with everything.

R

Robert Curvin 11:03

Was he one of the proponents of what came to be known as revolutionary theology? That became like very much of a debate in Latin America.

W

William Linder 11:13

Yeah, I think he was very much provided a forum for that. In Cuernavaca, there were a couple of things. One, they had the language school, which was separate from him. And but the second, which was really his thing is they had all vast numbers of people coming, and giving lectures, and the way he set it up was kind of interesting, it followed his philosophy, someone would come and say, look, I think I'd like to give three lectures on anthropology and the native population here and their, their, you know, their interaction with colonialism. And he'd say, Fine, and you would he'd show you the tree you'd be teaching under, and you'd set your time. And then you, your students would come in, you'd negotiate them for the price. So that was the first thing they did, negotiate what the price would be. And when everybody agreed, they then went on with the series.

R

Robert Curvin 12:10

With the course. And that's how tuition was set?

W

William Linder 12:18

It depended upon demand and negotiations.

R

Robert Curvin 12:20

Wow. So as the rent strike actually grew, and became a major force, actually, in city politics, central word politics, and I would imagine intra church politics as well. What was the reaction of the hierarchy of the church to such activism going on?

W

William Linder 12:46

I think they were pretty, you know, overall conservative ism. You know, in a sense of we get along with the authorities, you know this was kind of anti authorities.

R

Robert Curvin 12:56

Kind of (laughs).

W

William Linder 12:58

Father Tom Comerford went to jail, which shook them up, right, you know, that he would go to jail for this. They really didn't know how to handle it, it really wasn't so much they weren't for it or against it they just didn't know what to do. They would have preferred it didn't happen, but you know, they didn't know how to handle it. And of course, for the residents that they ended up the courts were not very efficient. So the money they held in escrow. They eventually used for everybody bought houses, you know, they had quite a few people bought houses in Vailsburg area.

R

Robert Curvin 13:33

With their escrow. So the rent, the rent, money was gone.

W

William Linder 13:38

The rent money was gone and went into their new homes. And every so often, I see one of the people and just in passing, but you know, they're still in those homes and so on. Or this was a starter home and they got another home somewhere else.

R

Robert Curvin 13:54

Paying your mortgage. And your interpretation of this, that this was a just and appropriate way of resolving their dilemma of being in substandard housing for those years.

W

William Linder 14:07

I think we had the amount of public housing we had not because of, uh, the social conscience of the authorities, but because I think the politics of it. It meant big contracts for the construction. I mean we produce more per capita, hous- public housing than anywhere in the nation. And I don't think I had anything to do with the people who needed housing it had to do with and so and I think it was a very inferior design compared to other places in the country. We had like

Scudder Homes was the last of the high rise built and I could remember they had these in the kitchen had these big tubs like you would have in a wash for a wash sink you know, and no one put doors on on closets you put drapes. You know, and it was things like that. I mean, everything was so. And the kitchen area, you know, was very bad. And it ran right into the living room dining room was all one actually one big room in Scudder Homes so it was-

R

Robert Curvin 15:16

So in absence of space and dignity, or dignity and space, that in some cases, I mean, I remember being in some of those projects myself, and they were not very, I guess, humane in a way.

W

William Linder 15:35

Right. Yeah, they violated code. So for example, the corridors in there would not meet the Newark fire code, but they could do it with public housing, they didn't have to follow the code.

R

Robert Curvin 15:45

They were exempt.

W

William Linder 15:46

Yeah. They did the staircases on each end of a long, narrow corridor was certainly very uninteresting. And the elevators were spread like that. So it wasn't a matter if one went down, you'd have to go across the whole corridor to the other side to see if that one was operating, you know, as against having 'em next to each other in a center core. But a center core costs more money, and they were actually maximizing the dollars, but the maximization of dollars did not help the residents, you know, (unintelligible) more than they have more money to profit (unintelligible)

R

Robert Curvin 16:25

As you probably know, a number of observers sociologists have c- have referred to the public housing project projects built in that period as built on the basis of prison architecture. And they were boxed and square, really built more for social control as opposed to for human open, open living.

W

William Linder 16:52

Well, if you compared Hayes homes, which was the oldest with Stella Wright, and with Scudder. Hayes homes was a much superior design.

R

Robert Curvin 17:01

Interesting. Why, how do you account for that? You think as the system grew it got it got worse? It got greedy.

W

William Linder 17:11

Greedy, yeah. More of the money went into the profit side, less went into actually delivering the product.

R

Robert Curvin 17:18

Delivering the product. Interesting.

W

William Linder 17:20

Yeah. I think we lost a lot Hayes was by far the superior design. I mean, it wasn't great, but it was by far the superior design.

R

Robert Curvin 17:29

Now, in the midst of the rent strike, there were a lot of other things going on in the city, and then ultimately, the Rebellion, right the disturbances occurred right around the corner, from your church. Where were you then and what was it like, at that period, and you tell me a little bit about some of your experiences and reactions in the community, in the aftermath?

W

William Linder 17:59

Right, well, we would have been about a block from the site of where it all started. We had a novena that day and it goes back to the old St. Jude novena when the church was on Academy street before it burned down. And we had the novena St. Jude and that night I had it the last novena would have been at seven o'clock. At dinner we were discussing because that feeling out in the community was something was gonna happen. Very much. So we all agreed that I would go and say a few prayers and then send everybody home quickly. That we were, at any moment something was gonna happen. And in fact, after we dismissed everybody, I locked up and I walked down towards Hayes Homes towards the precinct, the police precinct. And I got just at the edge of that parking lot that was across from the, you know, which was the Hayes Homes parking lot, when people were running at me running away from the place.

R

Robert Curvin 19:06

And then, what did you do?

W

William Linder 19:08

I actually, you know, there was no threat to me, I didn't have any bad encounters. I stayed out there for a while. You know, we we had that building that was right in the middle of complex was a senior building. I was concerned about them, you know, because they could witness all of it. They may have been in their houses, but they were witnessing what was going on. I stayed out pretty late. And then the next morning I was back out again.

R

Robert Curvin 19:39

Trying to (unintelligible)

W

William Linder 19:41

I really just walked the area and got the needs I guess. I resented some of the efforts to calm it down because I guess two things in my head. One is they should have done it before then. Before something happened, you know, so now don't come late, and then. Also, so much of the calming down efforts were connected with the mayor, the mayor, the mayor's office, which doubly made it, you know, the wrong thing. And I think that also that the police were participating in looting. By that point by the next morning, they were already, you know, doing their thing, right. So, you know, what we asking people to do, we should have told the police to do because that was my feeling. It was not a nice scene. And I didn't see that many people out from that I knew in that area, and I walked it every day. I think we really the the, the most destructive elements were the police. And the second I resented the politicians who came back and, you know, we're giving out flyers saying, you know, go home, should have been around earlier.

R

Robert Curvin 20:58

Right. Trying to help deal with some of the issues.

W

William Linder 21:01

None of them stayed past 3, 3:30 in the afternoon anyway. So but I walked Hayes Homes in particular every day in all hours. We brought food. We set, first thing we did was set up a food system for the seniors. They were the ones we really tried to take care of them, we gave them basic things. You know, milk, cheese and bread, things like about eight items. And then we eventually set up an open air market as it was, free, it was free in the yard at at Queen of Angels, the school yard. And we set up tables there and we put things on it, we brought some truck trailer trucks of items in Spam, I could remember- it's getting famous again. We used to get a trailer truck of Spam, one of potatoes, one of bread. And a couple of cases we had to go out and take come in with the driver to get him to come in to the to Queen of Angels.

R

Robert Curvin 22:09

Now to go back a little bit on the course of the disturbance. The medical aspect has been

NOW TO GO BACK A LITTLE BIT ON THE CAUSES OF THE DISTURBANCES. THE MEDICAL SCHOOL HAS BEEN development as I pointed out and you were right in the middle to heart of that area where the medical school would have had and has had a major impact. Were you at all concerned and involved with the medical school plans?

W

William Linder 22:36

Oh, yeah, very much. I did agree that we needed the med school here if we were ever go- Cause remember at that time in all the indices of public health Newark was worst, I mean, TB, you know down. I mean, things that should have been wiped out.

R

Robert Curvin 22:51

Maternal mortality.

W

William Linder 22:53

Yeah we were still involved in. And I think Dick Hughes as governor really wanted to see, you know, but I don't think he envisioned what took place. You know, I mean, I don't know how much of a conscience the new university had. But I think he thought they would have, you know, it certainly didn't need to be that big, you know, that 154

R

Robert Curvin 23:18

They wanted 150 acres.

W

William Linder 23:19

Yeah. And they ended up with 57. You know, which was, you know, fair enough, but at least, you know, maybe a third of what they wanted originally. And there's no need, you know, I could remember having these arguments, you know, you can build up you don't have to build laterally design a complex, you know, hopefully it was going to help public health, which I never did my mind.

R

Robert Curvin 23:53

Never did. So you've been close neighbor to the hospital.

W

William Linder 23:57

Yes, very much.

R

Robert Curvin 23:58

You have had a much closer and more intimate view of how they have related to the community. How would you-

W

William Linder 24:09

Yeah, the other connection I had, by the way, which is that I would we were answering the the night calls at Martland as priests.

R

Robert Curvin 24:19

I see, oh really?

W

William Linder 24:19

So I was there probably in the morning hours at least two a week that was pretty and particularly in emergency and emergency in the old this is when the city had in fact, we had a parishioner at Queen of Angels who was a nursing assistant used to do the sewing up of people in the emergency. There was no doctor. Half the shifts they had no doctor.

R

Robert Curvin 24:52

And he was? She? Was sewing up people? Without a license? With no training.

W

William Linder 24:58

Yeah it was before licenses. But you wouldn't be able to do it anyway (unintelligible)...have a license.

R

Robert Curvin 25:06

Oh, my goodness.

W

William Linder 25:07

No, it was a bad bad place. So it needed to change. ou know, and that sense, but it really, it was not a positive influence. Now that neighborhood, from what I remember, it was old. And the buildings were wood structures for the most part. But it was a healthy neighborhood. You know, people knew each other, and there was there really was really block activity. You know, I could still remember an awful lot of things that happened in that neighborhood that were very, very positive.

R

Robert Curvin 25:43

So, after the disturbances, though, then went on to have these agreements that led to the medical school which were probably more ignored than obeyed. But nevertheless, the immediate aftermath of the neighborhood Queen of Angels became a catalyst in a way toward in the efforts at reconciliation. Can you talk a little bit about that?

W

William Linder 26:14

Well, we got involved in a number of things. One was the, the first health that North Jersey, what was the, health facility, it was in the Krueger building. And that, you know, the idea would be that the university would participate in that. And then it would also be run pretty much like a union. In fact, people involved in setting it up were unions. And it would function like that, with regard to the people would actually, you know, be heard within them, like the local union. That never took place, the university did not like, you know, the presence, presence of that facility. Eventually-

R

Robert Curvin 26:58

Because they saw it as competition or?

W

William Linder 27:00

They saw it as competition. And I think they didn't like sharing, you know, the power. And this, the power would definitely be in the hands of the local board leader and people that use the medical facility, I don't think they like that. I think in the eyes of I don't think that Hughes thought out where we've go. But I think that would have been very compatible with his thinking, because that would have tied community interests and community power with health. And that was not very popular. So they undermine it, plus there was a corruption issue there, in that particular facility. So eventually it closed. But there were others.

R

Robert Curvin 27:45

How long did it stay open? Do you remember?

W

William Linder 27:47

It was open probably all during the Great Society came out the Great Society programs. In fact, Queen of Angels, we had a free clinic with Dr. Leon Smith, who was, you know, kind of nationally famous for his work in AIDS and other infectious diseases. He volunteered as the medical director with us, we closed down, so there'd be no competition, you know, that we really just recognized that they, they had the funding, and they had the, you know, we thought the support. And so we closed down our facility. And ours was a completely free volunteer

facility. Dr. Jim Oleske who was famous with infants and toddlers with AIDS the one that kind of discovered the connection, he was a volunteer as a med student. Yeah, we had a lot of good people.

R

Robert Curvin 28:41

So but what about the other, you know, recruiting the support from the suburbs? Or maybe what we need to do is just talk about the organization of New Community, and how soon after the disturbances did that happen? How did it happen? Where did the thinking come from? What was your model? And, you know.

W

William Linder 29:07

Well, I think I got there in 63. And, of course, that was the height of the Civil Rights, you know, and the March on Washington, but then afterwards, Selma to Montgomery, you know, a host of things that began to happen. And we became more and more support systems for it. And in fact, a number of things I went to myself, including Montgomery. So I think that was happening. We also had the Great Society programs. And so people began to get a taste of leadership. And I think that was really the downfall of the old system to tell you the truth. People began to run programs. They began to, you know, make decisions. Not everywhere. That whole thing was set up in three divis-, three areas, the Central Ward was where we were, and actually it's probably no accident that the first president of the area board was a priest. Came out of Queen of Angels, you know, and the North Ward was the political one. And so I think people got a taste of running programs. We produced more leaders, I think, in that short period than ever before in history. And I always say the Central Ward was a colony, you know, principals were white, the social workers were white, the teachers were white. Everything was controlled, including the rackets were controlled from outside our community, you know, people in any control power and anything. So I think that that really gave people a taste of things. We had a lot of good people came out of all of that. And I think that led to plus the Civil Rights Movement itself, I think, you know, we all got where Dr. King was that something more had to be done, particularly in northeastern cities, if we're going to connect the opportunities with the people needed them. So we need to start Community Development Cooperations. I think he was into that. In, fact, I know it was.

R

Robert Curvin 31:12

So you were thinking about starting a CDC, even before the rebellion?

W

William Linder 31:18

Yes, we were in discussion, we had about, which was interesting with all men. And it was in that period before the summer disorders, discussing what it should look like, and so on. And then when it happened in July of 67, then we said, "Hey, we got to stop talking and."

R

Robert Curvin 31:39

ROBERT CURVIN 32:00

Get moving. Right. Now, just before we get to the election, I just want to ask you a little bit about your thoughts about Addonizio and also the role of corruption in the city. You know, from then, even through now. And how does that play out? You think Huey got a bad deal from the Black community?

W

William Linder 32:06

No, I think you got a good deal. I think I think Huey liked people. So I don't think from that sense, I think from a personal sense. I don't think that's the problem. I really do believe it's his gambling debts, brought him down. And you know, that's what they used to call them the Big A, (unintelligible) The Big A. That was the street name. And I think, you know, I've never remember hearing anybody saying anything negative about Huey as a person. It was what was happening out in the community, and the lack of participation and leadership and so on, you know, I mean, that's why I saw him, um, and I think the corruption because what he needed, you know, that's why the public housing authority couldn't, not just for him, but there were others, obviously, their were congressmen. And I think that's where the corruption came from.

R

Robert Curvin 33:04

But Newark has this history or tradition, culture of, you know, periodically, people doing just some really, almost too obvious, illegal things, in the name of politics, right? Is there something? Do we pay more attention to it? Because we're here? Or are we any different than other cities? Are we different than Jersey, or North Bergen, for example?

W

William Linder 33:37

Because of my involvement, maybe in the CDC movement, not as much now, but back a few years, you know, I don't think any place experiences corruption like Newark. I think it is really very much in our culture. And I don't know where it went, I came when Addonizio was mayor, and it certainly was here, then. And I think, you know, his chief of staff, for example, I could remember was really, you know, I didn't believe he had any conscience, you know, in talking to about any issue. And then I think what's happened since, you know, that's all you hear is, "Well, they did it, so therefore, we should do it. We should get the same benefits", and so on. I mean, there's no mafia(?) of public serving in there. When I went to learn about community organizing, I went out to the Father Daly. You know, the mayor. And saw what he was doing, you know, and it was very interesting. It was nothing, I experienced in Newark, that's for sure. And he was much more efficient at what he did. But there certainly was much more public service involved in what they were doing didn't take away the political organizing, you know.

R

Robert Curvin 34:53

So the results, the corruption was still there, but the results were more service oriented. Yeah.

W

William Linder 35:00

I think it much more around what I knew with Hague. You know that people didn't lose their place they lived, they didn't-, you know. They had food on the table and they had health care. And whatever. I think it was much more like that. I think it did a great, most of it really benefited the people. And that became their political strength, I think because I think people believed in him. Because because they knew that it was they had a Social Security system. Here, they didn't get the benefits of it. You know, they didn't get the benefits, nothing was required. The organization I saw Daly Senior do is that the services in the neighborhood were very good. In fact, that was originally going to go to Saul Alinsky school, and ended up someone diverted me, to Daly. And he was very good.

R Robert Curvin 35:55

You actually were trained in the city government or

W William Linder 35:58

I stayed there for about 10 days. And I had access to everybody. And the person who was my number one mentor was his his chief counsel, legal counsel, whose wife was actually an organizer in the Puerto Rican community. So you know, when the Spanish (unintelligible)

R Robert Curvin 36:18

(unintelligible) And you went there, to learn how they organize their, their own systems and to serve people.

W William Linder 36:25

It was Cyril Tyson who told me, I was going out to Alinsky, he said, don't go to Alinsky, you go to Daly. And introduced me by phone to the person who headed this Community Action effort. I can't remember the name now, but was nationally known and said, "Sure, come." In fact, they supplied me with an apartment in that Mexican neighborhood.

R Robert Curvin 36:53

So you came back and you applied some of these ideas to how you organize New Community. Over the years. I know there are many, many different things that New Community has done, but for the sake of telling the story. How do we list the major achievements? How do you how do you? How do you define them?

W William Linder 37:19

Well, I think in the sense of projects, we began with housing, because even though we had all this public housing, no one was happy with it. So we tried. And we hit at a great time when they were creating the Housing Mortgage Finance Agency in the state and Ylvsacker, Paul

Ylvsacker was, you know, doing that. So it was a good time in the state. And then we, Section Eight came, and we happened to be at the right place and the right time, mostly because we didn't get along with the city authorities. The state took an interest in us.

R

Robert Curvin 37:55

So you built housing, affordable housing for low-income people

W

William Linder 37:59

So in the 70s, we put more housing than any other nonprofit in the state, New Community did.

R

Robert Curvin 38:07

How many units do you know?

W

William Linder 38:08

Probably about 1600 units, over about an 8 year period.

R

Robert Curvin 38:12

In the 70s?

W

William Linder 38:12

Yeah.

R

Robert Curvin 38:15

And how many units does New Community manage or own or operate in Newark now?

W

William Linder 38:20

We now have about 1700. Not that many more, but we've built a lot. And we've also managed and rehabbed a lot. So we probably have about 2000 more units that are now spun off from us. Some of those were pretty large projects. And we also have done about 300 units of HOMA(?) purchasing in the Central Ward. So in other words that we we did the projects and the condominiums, and we spun them off. So we did a lot more housing, but we've done tried to mix the community up a little bit more.

 Robert Curvin 39:01

Now. The Housing Authority has also built some new housing recently under Hope Six, right? How do you compare your housing and how is that their housing working out?

 William Linder 39:14

Well, I think you know, they're basically, and it goes back to back quite a bit to the first years of Sharpe James as Mayor. They said they wanted to get out of public housing and wanting to get in development. So I guess they have they've gotten into building an arena or being the financial vehicle for the arena, but they really aren't doing much in public housing. So like two weeks ago, I had two of the council people came here separately and independently said, "You know, we don't have a public housing agency." New Community is it. We're the only people reaching the income levels that we are they don't.

 Robert Curvin 39:52

They've raised the bar. So does this mean that-

 William Linder 39:55

They've they've raised the bar.

 Robert Curvin 39:58

So does this mean that the Housing Authority has lost its capacity to manage places the public housing that still remains like Seth?

 William Linder 40:07

Yeah, I believe so. Yeah, I think you're gonna see them get rid of all of it. I think, you know, we're down the road, we're beginning to see, you know, the reduction of public housing. And and it's been replaced by kind of turnkey operations, which don't necessarily serve the income levels. Right now in doing a plan, a plan for relocation. I don't think anybody counts on the Housing Authority to be able to participate. And it would have been number one.

 Robert Curvin 40:37

Would you say public housing then has been a total failure in Newarrk?

 William Linder 40:42

I think so. Yes. I would judge it that. Yeah. Because I don't think it's public housing anymore.

I think so. Yes, I would judge it that. Yeah, because I don't think it's public housing anymore.

R Robert Curvin 40:49

I think public housing in and of itself is not a bad thing. Now, would you agree?

W William Linder 40:57

Oh, yeah. I agree. 100%, you go to England-

R Robert Curvin 41:01

Or even New York.

W William Linder 41:03

New York, New York's a good example. Right, New York is very, very efficient.

R Robert Curvin 41:09

It's really all about management. Absence of corruption. And maybe to some extent, being willing to press up against some of the restrictions that the government imposes. And for example of I've always heard that, in New York, they've always allowed a few police officers or firemen to live in public housing, as a way of keeping them more integrated economically, than just having these. But Newark never did that.

W William Linder 41:46

No, no. We've done it with our own housing, actually, on the tax credit jobs we have now we have police in it. Section Eight, we haven't been able to, but we have put Sisters in it, actually religious women in to some of the units to try to get a softening as it were effect on the place.

R Robert Curvin 42:04

And it makes a difference.

W William Linder 42:05

I think it makes a difference. Yeah, we haven't gotten them to get to want to stay there. But we got another project coming up soon, which we hope to do it again. So we're going to put a chapel in the new, a conference room.

R

Robert Curvin 42:21

So, now, after housing, what would you then say, has been the-

W

William Linder 42:28

Well I think the one that's really was good with the retail because it was economically, you know, very viable. But you had all these people that felt you couldn't put a market in the inner city. Food market in the inner city. And according to our survey and actually one of the reporters at, uh, who's an editor now at the New York Times did a survey himself, we cut 30 by 38%, the food prices. We introduced really fresh fish, you know, like from the fish market, instead of you know, everything frozen and old. And the last of the of the distributors, fish. Meats improved, and produce immensely improved, improved. And then we were able to tie marketing with health education. So if you're talking about fruit of the diet, we could have a week where we could have sales on different items in the produce department. And we tried to tie them together. We tried to expand the fish menu of people in this area. So we began to have something other than whiting. And we put a put it on sale. So people would experiment, you know and try it. And it was cheaper than the whiting, for one. So it got people to get develop the taste. We're able to do testing right in the store, if it has Pathmark in the central ward has more people going through it than any place in the central ward. So why not do your blood testing there, you know, why not take blood pressure? Why not have a van there for women's health? You can do all kinds of things. Once you have the place, you know, and you got the people going through it. Plus it was 275 jobs that we didn't have. And approximately 110 of 120 of those were union. So they got health benefits. And then one of the VPS from Pathmark took me on a tour of in Hudson County of some of their upscale markets that Pathmark was doing and I saw our people as department managers, so that the opportunity to move on where everybody including myself played down the jobs in retail and food. The opportunities were immense because they couldn't get people. And so, you know, if you showed some sign of leadership, you can end up as a department manager.

R

Robert Curvin 45:08

What about the whole job picture in general, though, in the, in the central Ward and the city in general, right. What else has New Community done? And what are some of the things that you think could be done that are not being done or being done not necessarily, efficiently, that could be improved to address the jobs situation?

W

William Linder 45:32

Well in our plan, the first part was, we tried to keep all the jobs in. So, in housing, we were going to handle the management, the maintenance, the security, and so on. So we got a good number of jobs that way. Then we moved to health care, and early childhood, the labor intensive. The nursing home has about 275 jobs for 180 people. And the majority of 'em are really not highly skilled, it's something you can train for, and actually skilled (unintelligible) training, they can do that training, too. And then we saw retail. So that's why we saw the shopping center, it's intensive, seven days a week, 24 hours. 275 jobs. At first, we didn't like

that they were retail jobs, I take that back now. I think they have great potential. It's what you make of them and what training you give to them after they get there. So I think that that worked very well. Plus, on our end of it we had a lot of food operations in the beginning. So we could hire young people. And we need those jobs desperately. And so we could do a lot of that. So we basically that next one we went to was manufacturing. And that's what we hadn't planned for. Building houses, modular houses. And that we never got cooperation from the city. So it didn't, you know, we never took off. Yeah, we did well, but we were up and down, up and down, you know, we'd have an order for 150 houses. You know, and then that would run out, we had nothing replace it, we had too many layoffs, that could have been prevented.

R

Robert Curvin 47:19

So that was an unstable, unstable enterprise.

W

William Linder 47:23

But I think that had great potential. That was very good. On the ex offender side, I'd say about two thirds of the workforce came out of the prison system. And, and so they could learn a skill very quickly. And it's with the hands, which I think is a good one. You know, and it also had the study to it, like we our classroom, right there so they could learn reading (unintelligible). Blueprints, they could do their basic education. And we also did a lot of technology training. Looking to the future, so we were trying to really get them to a point where they could eventually move in the marketplace very well. So that's then the area's training. And we have probably the two big ones we have is youth automotive, which we're doing with Ford but I don't know what's going to happen to that. And we train certified (unintelligible) technicians.

R

Robert Curvin 48:22

Are they cutting back on the investment or?

W

William Linder 48:25

Well, there's now only three groups in the country. We're one of the three. So I don't know what the next cut back, the amount of money is down. The great part that they never had a huge amount of cash, but what they would do is maybe \$100,000 a year. Now it's under 50. But they also you would have access to their plants. And so for example, when they were in New Jersey with a plant, that plant regularly would donate equipment to us that we could never pay \$60,000 \$70,000 for the equipment and they give it to us well, and it didn't count on their sheet forgiving in Detroit didn't count. It was separate, the plant was kind of autonomous and what it did. And then the third was they could give us new cars. And what they did that was for their insurance company. So for example, if there was a flood in a lot when they had cars, we pick up about 10 to 12 cars each year, and they'd just write them off. So that didn't count again in the equation. So they were very good. And the other one is the one more recently is the licensed practical nurse program and that's comes with it, health is the fastest growing and we were only working to have certified nursing assistants a home health care, we needed to move to the next dimension. And you know, CNA certified nursing assistants gets about \$10.50

an hour in health care. But as a LPN licensed Practical Nurse, they get \$25 an hour. So it's, you know, it's a nice move for them. So now we do that training. And we have about, I'd say about 1800 on the waiting list. And we have a little over 300 in training at any one time.

R

Robert Curvin 50:15

And you do that with the Essex County College or no?

W

William Linder 50:18

No we do that ourselves. Yeah, we got our own license or whatever they call them. We've got our own license, we're accredited. Actually, the last accreditation was about a year and a half ago. And they gave us seven years, which is beyond even the max. They actually created a new category. It's and then we get Pell, were eligible for Pell. And in our case, it's overwhelmingly grants because of the income levels. And in the first three classes, we did only people who had been on welfare. And had moved up to certified nursing assistants or to home health care providers. And then we raised over a million dollars to give them scholarships and actually pay them while they were going to school. And we raised that with a couple of foundations. Now we're really into more of the mainstream, it's mainstream now we depend upon Pell.

R

Robert Curvin 51:19

So if you take this the total sum of the employees in New Community and all the various enterprises, what's the number? What's the total job base?

W

William Linder 51:34

Well, the the one that's with New Community right now is about 800. It had been 2300. What we've done is we've spun some of those things off, separately or independently, so that we've reduced it. Cut- now we're having cutbacks for the first time.

R

Robert Curvin 51:51

So you don't count the you don't count the Pathmark employees anymore.

W

William Linder 51:55

If I did the 2300, I did but we don't anymore. Right, and we don't count Babyland so about 350 transferred with Babyland. So we began to we've begun as it were to begin to go, you know, we bought it down we're still bringing it down, then we're gonna start growing again, I hope.



Robert Curvin 52:19

Now, how do you make all this work financially? Is his New Community self sufficient? And that is the do all of the enterprises through cross subsidy and pay for themselves?

William Linder 52:39

Well, two things I think we've done. One is that we try not to do it in grants. And we're not very good at grants we've tried, we don't do well in grants. A couple of exceptions. You of all, one of, is probably our one big star.

Robert Curvin 52:59

I hope that we can have that pattern again.

William Linder 53:03

But what we tried to do is the third party kind of I call third party payments, Medicaid, Medicare, and Section Eight housing. So they're by contract and not by Grant, and they're technically serving the people. And you, you know, you do the performance of the work. And then we maximize that into areas where it's very labor intensive. The second thing is unlike, I think almost all nonprofits we're into real estate, and we use real estate strategically to generate money. So our real estate and is really now that's happened to us in the present climate. The land we have that we're using in projects is down 50% of value. So we're losing that value. And the second is that there is no refinancing money available right now. So we can't go and take a project where we have 30 years, and we got a lot of equity in it. And we should be able to convert it, we can't. So we've gone through the toughest time because that was major, major money, I would say probably three or more million a year subsidized.

Robert Curvin 54:24

In activity, equity refinancing.

William Linder 54:27

Right, yeah. Because we never intended on housing or health care or whatever. Never do anything else than what they did. So we don't you know, we're not trying to take money and move out of the country we're trying to put it back in.

Robert Curvin 54:45

Is there any opportunity in the stimul- stimulus plan for New Community Corporation? How are we doing on tape? Switch to a little bit more about politics. Okay. Talk about your relationship, the period of Gibson's administration. What kind of support did you get? How, how did you see

the administration working? I know you were very supportive. And Ken was the mayor was on your board at one time he was very supportive of the rent strike. So what happened after he was elected?

W

William Linder 54:52

We're hoping there's about 10 things we've identified that we're pursuing hopefully. Like even something like energy where we've always wanted to do some projects and we couldn't. We're looking now to see, what we can. If we can knock down our public service bills, we've accomplished a great deal. And that's what we're trying to do now, reduce all of that energy use. I thought after he got elected, he kind of forgot about us. I don't think we were in the equation. We came back in because of two things. I think one is when he made Thomas Arrow, his development person, you know, that helped. And I think the second was that we were pretty successful in the Carter years with the projects we were doing in Section Eight. And Marcy Kaptur, who's a congresswoman was actually the White House person in domestic (?) And she used to come regularly, and we could throw good parties, groundbreaking parties, and get a lot of attention. And so we began to see the secretary of HUD come regularly. Marcy was here, which was a good influence, because we had someone that would make calls when things didn't happen, and so on. And then I think that the mayor was very active, although with (Miss Harrow?) was active. I think we did well. But it was only in the area of early housing, we could have done some other very interesting things and we did.

R

Robert Curvin 57:11

Did, did you have the support when there were grants? I mean, you didn't have any difficulty?

W

William Linder 57:20

We didn't have any difficulty, we had no difficulty right.

R

Robert Curvin 57:22

Things getting signed or generally, the administration might not have been active enough, but they weren't hostile.

W

William Linder 57:31

No, and we needed them for the Federal but we didn't need them for the state interestingly enough. The state made its own decisions with regard to Newark and I think I think they always were uncomfortable with some of the things happening in Newark.

R

Robert Curvin 57:46

Well, that's interesting. Tell me a little bit more about that, because one of my major themes

that I'm trying to use to illuminate how politics works in Newark, is the fragmentation of decision making. How so many things are at the state level, the county level, the federal level, and so on. So the state is not necessarily an obstacle, they can be supportive, or th- or they may not be.

W

William Linder 58:16

Yeah, for the most part, they were very supportive. I think the only difference would be is you would change with regard to whether it was a Republican or a Democrat in the capital.

R

Robert Curvin 58:29

Did you have to change your party affiliation?

W

William Linder 58:31

No, we didn't have to do that but we'd change our vocabulary. Word things differently. I think, for example, Tom Kean allowed us to use a lot of our resources that weren't allowed maybe under regulatory controls, for example, reserves on housing. When it wasn't directly ours, we were allowed to borrow from it like it was an investment program. So New Community was allowed to invest in New Community, you know, which was great, frankly, that's why we have a shopping center, because we didn't have enough capital to come up with 100% for the real estate, two thirds of the money to open a store. So you know, he allowed us to really work that out on other things, we had enough money and so on from housing reserves, but they were not even they were Hughes-, they were Community Development reserves, not project related reserves.

R

Robert Curvin 59:32

But the point you were making, though, about the state not liking the what the city was doing or not particularly to work for the city has a lot to do with this ongoing reputation of the city of not being terribly efficient, or working with transparency. So the reputation of the city has a real impact in state decision making.

W

William Linder 1:00:06

Oh yeah, I think, definitely. And I think more into the next administration. I think all any credibility that there was going to be a change was lost by the next administration.

R

Robert Curvin 1:00:19

When Sharpe came in when. And you did not have a good relationship with James?

W

William Linder 1:00:24

No, not at all.

R

Robert Curvin 1:00:24

And why was he so antagonistic?

W

William Linder 1:00:28

I think one was philosophical, which really had to do with one has to do with (unintelligible) and one doesn't. One was we were interested in projects that reached down so for example, we wanted to open a center for infants and toddlers for AIDS, it would have been the first one in the country. Mak- mostly because the children had to stay in the in Pediatrics Hospital, which at that time was right here across the street. And they, they were bad till they died. And their life expectancy was about five years. What we proposed is that if they were allowed, they were not, they were still isolated from others, because we couldn't tackle that medical issue. But what we could tackle is we could put, you know, a group together, 30 of them, and they would interact and socialize that way and they'd have a little bit more normal life. And so when we wanted to do that he felt anything with AIDS was negative towards the city. We eventually got the regional office for the federal regional office to send the letter so that it would get here on a Friday, he had three working days to veto it. And the idea being no one works on Friday at City Hall, no one works on Monday. So the best they'd see it is Tuesday, and it'd be too late to do anything. So that was the strategy. Then, on the home- on the homeless, we had 102 units. It was the largest project by far for homeless and it was not a shelter. It was transitional housing for homeless families. What we tried to do is have them, keep them for a year and have training programs. We even had daycare because the children were underfed, they were you know, the sizes were off the weights were off. So we tried to do something was really took care of the whole family. We built it and we were totally equipped. And the city wouldn't give us a certificate of occupancy. And then channel seven, I'm trying to think it was a Hispanic woman who picked it up.

R

Robert Curvin 1:02:44

Laurie Rojas?

W

William Linder 1:02:45

Laurie Rojas right. She called me up and she said, "Look, are you willing to trust me and leave it my hands?" I said, "Sure. I'm, we're not doing anything. So I'll welcome anybody." She say, "Here's what I'm gonna do, I'm gonna go to see the Mayor privately. I'm gonna tell him, he can either be it was just before Christmas, he could either be Santa Claus or Scrooge. We're gonna run the Christmas segment. And he will be lighting the Christmas tree and the New Harmony house for homeless or he will be Scrooge. Now he's got to make a choice. And if he would, you know, you'll have a tree in the middle. I said, Yes. We'll plant a tree today. We have put a Christmas tree in there and we'll have it ready. And he decided to be Santa Claus.

R

Robert Curvin 1:03:39

Now, I know a little I think I know a little bit about the background about this. Wasn't there a particular developer who was very concerned about your opening a homeless shelter? Because he was at the same time running a homeless hotel?

W

William Linder 1:03:57

Okay, well, that's a, our famous Robert Treat in Newark. Yeah, not only that they had the one with, the Carlton.

R

Robert Curvin 1:04:04

The Lincoln Hotel.

W

William Linder 1:04:05

Lincoln. What's the other one right by PSEG? Was that Carlton?

R

Robert Curvin 1:04:10

Carlton that one too?

W

William Linder 1:04:11

Yeah that was that was in the loop yeah, yeah. The Lincoln was in certainly.

R

Robert Curvin 1:04:15

Right, but was wasn't that part of the equation? As I recall.

W

William Linder 1:04:19

We had actually sent people down and we found that people particularly in the Lincoln we sent people down and that the people had had no place to cook obviously. They rent a room. And people would bring hot plates. And he would go out people and go through every day and inspect and remove the hot plates. And so then they had to use his luncheonette, which wasn't much of a thing.

R

Robert Curvin 1:04:46

ROBERT CURVIN 1:04:49

There was fire code issue though too.

W

William Linder 1:04:49

Yes. Yeah, but I'm not how conscientious they were on the fire code.

R

Robert Curvin 1:04:57

Right.

W

William Linder 1:04:58

But so you know, that was pretty much so then we began to make a fuss about that. And at the same time we were doing this project.

R

Robert Curvin 1:05:07

But you you got to you got it going.

W

William Linder 1:05:10

Yeah, well, we put kitchens in ours. So we'd solved the problem of-

R

Robert Curvin 1:05:15

But how does the CDC survive? When your work working in the context of a administration? Or working under the development of a government? That is so anti, everything you're trying to do? Even though you're serving constituents?

W

William Linder 1:05:37

Yeah. Well, I think it's very difficult. We lost a lot of great opportunities for people.

R

Robert Curvin 1:05:43

You did. And in terms of hiring you mean?

W

William Linder 1:05:46

I think in in the sense of what projects we could take on and therefore the types of people we

could hire, we should have been in health long ago. And I think, you know, we could have been very helpful to the city, in the sense of kind of leverage a lot more out of the University of Medicine and Dentistry, if we had that. So I think those things are very cooperative in the sense of changing the scene.

R Robert Curvin 1:06:14

Did you ever meet with the mayor, Mayor James? And what were those meetings like?

W William Linder 1:06:22

Well, Ray Chambers was always trying to orchestrate something, you know, so I didn't find them. I found, frankly, they were, you know, they were very light in dealing with the issues. You know, they really, you know, it was kind of like, like a song and dance. Right, in a routine. You know, there was nothing really of substance, you know I that was part of it. There were never any commitments to anything.

R Robert Curvin 1:06:51

So you think that even in these efforts, brokered by Ray Chambers, a powerful entrepreneur, philanthropist

W William Linder 1:06:59

who the mayor needed

R Robert Curvin 1:07:00

who the mayor needed, and was obviously a key player in developing the city, you still could not get any traction.

W William Linder 1:07:09

No. And I think that certain statewide and even US elected people who tried.

R Robert Curvin 1:07:22

Went to him and tried to advocate for you.

W William Linder 1:07:25

One Chair of the Democratic Party I know, in particular, told me that he was lining up, you

know, a couple of people to give him calls and tell him that- Didn't work.

R Robert Curvin 1:07:40

Well, your your comment at the end of the his trial and conviction, in a sense are very much understood in terms of, of this history. So, but so let me ask you about the current mayor and the current development situation, how do you what how do you look at the performance of Mayor Booker thus far?

W William Linder 1:08:09

Well, I think it's one thing unfortunately. I think what we have is integrity. That is great. I could support that more than anything, what I think that we don't have is he needs and he's beginning now he's got to be more interested in our neighborhoods. And I think we've seen a little bit of it of trying to remove some of the pol- policing from not removing it, but expanding from downtown into some of our neighborhoods. You know, we're only beginning since maybe last, in the past December of doing some things like that, you know, I think his interest. I know, he just, he had someone setting up a meeting to visit our health work we're doing in the Central Ward.

R Robert Curvin 1:08:59

Oh, good.

W William Linder 1:09:00

Yeah. So that's, uh, you know, I have been trying to get him more involved in the University of Medicine and Dentistry. He seems to be staying away from it. So I think he's more sees himself on some kind of national level. And I think he needs if he wants to get elected, he's going to be in an embarrassing position of going on but not having much. You know, he's leaving. And I think he needs to watch that. And that would benefit our city greatly if he could. I think he's brought good people in but again, I think they need to be educated. The deputy mayor he said it up so I could talk to him. He's out negotiating some property we have. Had to remind him stay away.

R Robert Curvin 1:09:45

That it was your property.

W William Linder 1:09:50

They did help us with the Orange Street Project, which is right across the street they did, uh, tell the state it was number one, because we should be able to get in the ground and get it, you know, get some economic activity going. But I think we could do other things. And we could

start earlier in the process. I think he doesn't control City Hall. I think he's got a lot of people in there, but they don't control it. And particularly some of them being outsiders makes it even more difficult.

R Robert Curvin 1:10:22

So who is controlling it?

W William Linder 1:10:23

I think, James. I think Sharpe's still

R Robert Curvin 1:10:27

In control? Really? By the people that he left behind?

W William Linder 1:10:33

People that are left behind. Yeah, I don't see they have anything to gain by joining the present Mayor. And I think they feel that, you know, there'll be another election and someone closer to the Sharpe style will be elected, they'll be back in, they'll be part of that. And I think that's a disaster. I think it's a real possibility fro my (unintelligible)

R Robert Curvin 1:11:03

What about crying? I mean, there seems to be an all out effort to attack this, uh, cancer, in the city of violence, and crime. And I'd like to hear your thoughts. First of all about what is it about? Why is this city so seemingly incapable of really coming to grips with these issues?

W William Linder 1:11:32

Well I think number one, the police department is still highly political. I think that's a problem. And this whole battle over police director, police chief is just the surface of it it's much deeper. Some under the election that James last ran-

R Robert Curvin 1:11:51

You think that the mob still has influence, uh, in the department?

W William Linder 1:11:56

Yeah very much. And I think in that election, that James, the last one he ran, that he ran

himself. Over 300 policemen gave the maximum amount of money to James's campaign.

R Robert Curvin 1:12:13

Over 300?

W William Linder 1:12:14

Yeah, over 300.

R Robert Curvin 1:12:17

Do you know what the maximum is?

W William Linder 1:12:18

I think it was 800. And, uh, the day after the election, a 31 page reassignment list came out. I mean, we don't even try to hide it. You could wait a month, the next day, because they want to get that message out there. And I think that's a big, big mistake. And I think the second is we got to, you know, we inherited certainly this administration, they, they inherited the the protection of the arena, New Jersey PAC and the Bears stadium. I think it's taken away from policing in the neighborhood, significantly. And I think they're trying to do something about it now. You know, back, I'd say maybe four months, that I've seen some walking patrols, for example, over in the New, where most of the New Community housing is. Doing some electronic devices to trace gunshots and so on. But I think this last thing, you know, with 15 shootings, and I think we our murder rate may dip down, but I may be for other reasons than that crime is down. It's not it really is not safe. And gangs, you can still go to sections of the city at night. The police don't go there.

R Robert Curvin 1:13:45

Don't go there at all.

W William Linder 1:13:46

No, the gangs control it.

R Robert Curvin 1:13:49

But what do you do about security? You have it directly or indirectly relationships to over 3000 units of housing. So how many how many families 3000 families.

 William Linder 1:14:05

Yeah, well we have about We have, we have, you know, 120 security they're not armed. But the advantage is, you know, when you have that and you have other things going, people tend not to be by you. But somewhere else. So for example, because we have someone out here at night, they're not here, but they're on the other side of United Hospital, you know, where the activities going and you know, they're not gonna have the hassle here. Bot that he couldn't deal with it. They certainly have weapons, they can deal with anything. But it's much easier-

 Robert Curvin 1:14:41

So your security people are not armed but are they trained?

 William Linder 1:14:46

They're trained.

 Robert Curvin 1:14:47

They're trained by the Newark police or?

 William Linder 1:14:49

No, we had that for a while. We had dropped out of that. We've gotta try to get we're looking into that again. But we were doing some training ourselves. And the Head of Secuirty is a former you know, assistant prosecutor and Newark policeman. So we're doing a little bit of it. We hire for the first time we hire some armed Newark police off duty.

 Robert Curvin 1:15:15

I see, right.

 William Linder 1:15:17

And that's new. New within about five years.

 Robert Curvin 1:15:21

Do you keep records on incidents of crime related on your property. So what is what is the record?

W William Linder 1:15:30

Very proud that we haven't had a murder.

R Robert Curvin 1:15:33

You have not had a murder? Right?

W William Linder 1:15:35

Although that's not exactly true, because we had that one wherein the person in- the guy was cleaning his rifle

R Robert Curvin 1:15:44

and shot through?

W William Linder 1:15:45

Shot through and someone was sleeping above.

R Robert Curvin 1:15:48

Yeah, that was in one of your buildings. But generally, the, the crime rate is- You mean the the police. What about the gangs? I mean, again, you know, there are gangs, and there are gangs. I mean, to some extent, all young people are part of some association, which some people call gangs, and some people call clubs or whatever. Why, again, this is this year seems to be a the emergence in the last 25 or 30 years. Yeah, there wasn't this kind of gang issue, as I recall, during the 60s. How do you explain it?

W William Linder 1:15:56

Yeah, well, the advantage what he does, if we're having trouble with the gangs, you know, he really will organize something with the county and Newark police and with our people and they seem to be appreciative if you can give them a lot of good information. You know, so that they, you know, they're they actually very efficient, carrying out whatever they're gonna do. Well, I think, I think the problem is, whether it's accurate, or what people perceive, they certainly perceive the worst. You just talk to anybody about gangs and story after story. I think the second is that we seem to have initiations that didn't exist before that you have to move up, you have to do certain things. And those different things are very antisocial.

R Robert Curvin 1:17:24

And sometimes violent

W William Linder 1:17:25

Violent, more often violent than not, more often violent. So that stuff is out. And you will have people tell you what nights things are gonna happen.

R Robert Curvin 1:17:38

They tell you.

W William Linder 1:17:39

Yeah. I've had some funerals of gang members and you know, really young/yeah (?)

R Robert Curvin 1:17:47

Where you've overseen the you've been the presiding priest, presiding priest?

W William Linder 1:17:53

Yeah. And you'll have about you know, 100 or more come with T shirts with the picture of the person. So they really you know, they're very visible in the sense of what they are and sometimes we'll have Newark police here when we've had funerals you know, I don't know what good that does, if that information does 'em much good

R Robert Curvin 1:18:16

You get to talk to their families in cases like this?

W William Linder 1:18:21

Yeah. Most of the time the family isn't- they know that but they're not connected (unintelligible) be and many times the actually the you know, the last one I had with two cousins you know, female cousins who knew about you know, everything but you know, just felt they had to take on the obligation of getting the person buried. Thought the world and because their relationship with them was not bad it was good.

R Robert Curvin 1:18:55

So we talk about a renaissance taking place in Newark is there do you see this as a renaissance?

W

William Linder 1:19:03

No, I don't see it at all.

R

Robert Curvin 1:19:05

Yeah, what do you see it as?

W

William Linder 1:19:09

The same.

R

Robert Curvin 1:19:10

The same?

W

William Linder 1:19:11

Yeah, yeah, I don't think he could walk around here at night. So I don't think we've reached that. You can't walk downtown at night unless we have an event at the arena. I don't see anything changing that. And I think it was a disaster a planning because they got that arena built and they don't have anything around it. Might help to stir, you know, we we run those see those articles in the Land they're pitiful when we count as a restaurant.

R

Robert Curvin 1:19:47

So how do you how do you keep your your vision perking? And when we came in you started by talking about new grants for new development projects and how do you keep going in a, after all these years?

W

William Linder 1:20:04

(Unintelligible). And the kids have been great. What do they say? Oh, that nothing can stop them. I've never seen such optimism. And (unintelligible) I'm at third grade. Next one is second grade. Third grade their still vocal, getting more vocal actually, it's interesting. The younger I get, the more I, I see people. And they, you know, they explain what they mean. And they they're on target. They'll say no excuses. I hope that and I think, you know, certainly parents struggling, you know, need some help. They really need help today. It's rough.

R

Robert Curvin 1:20:43

Where's the help gonna come from?

W

William Linder 1:20:45

Well, we're losing, we're closing our grammar school here. And we I've been involved in Catholic grammar schools for 46 years. So this one, they said, this one's different. We just can't afford it.

R

Robert Curvin 1:20:56

You can't pay the way anymore.

W

William Linder 1:21:00

And, you know, we graduate between 25 and 30 a year. And then we pay, you know, towards their high school, all the way through high school, we contribute. And judging and we don't really co-keep the numbers. But judging what I see, we're almost 100% go on to college, you know, we're very high. We have this gal that's a pilot on Continental going to the Paris route. You know, getting out through the system, You begin to see those things. It's really great. So it works.

R

Robert Curvin 1:21:39

So let me ask you the last and the hardest question of all, I guess. How is New Community gonna fare post Monsignor Linder. And what's the plan?

W

William Linder 1:21:52

Yeah, well, we've been working on the plan for a number of years, maybe five years, we now have the number, we have a new number two person for about a year and a half. And that will be the number one. That person is now the Chief Financial Officer. Not Chief Financial, chief operating officer was chief financial now is Chief Operating. So we're allowing time for the person to come up. The difficult is in fact, I had lunch with the person in charge, the difficulty today as it gets with me, I came in in the 60s. So the Ivan Illichs and Paul Ylvisackers and you know, all the people around, and you at CORE, you know, they're not here anymore. There's no you know, you don't have the same so he's coming in much stronger in financial background, got his MBA, and he's an auditor certified auditor, and you know, all the things. So he's coming in very strong financial, but the program side, he has great interest in international. That's a good one. And in fact, is building a school in Kenya right now. And helped us to setup our Demonstration Farm in Kenya

R

Robert Curvin 1:23:10

You have demonstration farm in Kenya?

W

William Linder 1:23:14

Would you believe urban works well thankfully it does well.

R

Robert Curvin 1:23:20

Is it in collaboration with a group there?

W

William Linder 1:23:23

What we do is we hire someone from the agricultural colleges, and to run it. And it's very simple operation, it really they have rain, but it's, you know, it's like the monsoons. And once a day, you know, it's, it's, so how to retain some of it by the way you hoe it, you know, introducing new plants that they didn't have yet, and a better grade of plant. We do chickens, and it's the the not free run, you know, you try to control the feed. And, you know, the movement we do cows the same way. And we're trying to upgrade that, you know, culturally, if you have three cows, it's better than one. And we're trying to get them to that it's one cow. That gives you three times as much milk it's better. And they don't walk anywhere, if you're eating you give them food, you control that. Things like that.

R

Robert Curvin 1:24:30

But most of all, you do have a plan for succession.

W

William Linder 1:24:33

Yeah, we have a plan, we're well on the way we're very close to where we want to be.

R

Robert Curvin 1:24:39

So I know you do this every week, as you said, you talk to young people on how they feel. But what do you think are some of the of all these years so 1963 to 2009? Wow. What do you think people like yourselves and myself and others should be saying to young people about the meaning of our lives to struggle, how to look to the future?

W

William Linder 1:25:08

Right. Well, I think at our part. We got to provide a much more protective environment for them, they really feel sometimes harassed into joining gangs, for example and do the wrong thing. We got to try to neutralize that. I think from our end, we need to work harder on that. I think the educational thing we have got to get out of this thing that money is the answer. You know, we're using that American you know, we can solve everything with money, right? So the

cities declining like Camden, whatever aquarium, spent a lot of money on an aquarium. I don't know what that does for the city of Camden. I don't know why downtown development does for Newark, to tell you the truth. I think we gotta get back to the neighborhoods. Do it, you know, project by project block by block. Do it right.

R Robert Curvin 1:26:08

Would you give your nemesis Sharpe James credit, though, for building some new housing in the neighborhoods?

W William Linder 1:26:19

Well, I think that that's gonna come back to haunt us shortly. Yeah, I think unfortunately, it's a lot of NESTA(?) housing and not homeownership. So, you know, those three family houses he built? Now we have renters in all of them. I don't know how they're gonna survive

R Robert Curvin 1:26:38

Without jobs, or income.

W William Linder 1:26:42

And I think we would have been better off requiring one of the units, you know, homeownership occupied, you know. I think the outside thing is not working, because what's happened is they're subdividing. So the three units are now six units.

R Robert Curvin 1:27:00

Wow. So Monsignor, is there anything that we missed? This is really a great discussion. Yeah, we're gonna put together a DVD, and we'll make a copy available to you.

W William Linder 1:27:17

Good luck on your project.

R Robert Curvin 1:27:19

Thank you. I need it. Thank you. Thank you.